

How to Love One Another, Part 1 - Romans 1:8-10 – January 16th, 2011

- If you were to ask me how one could identify a spiritually mature and godly believer, it would have to be, by their love, one for another.

John 13:35 NIV By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- In the text that we just read here in Romans chapter one, it becomes abundantly clear that the Apostle Paul truly loved these people.
- Now, I am keenly aware that there are many who see the Apostle Paul as a hard driving evangelist with unflinching fearlessness.
- While that may have certainly been who and how Paul was, I believe that he was also a very loving man, in that he truly loved people.

- It's for this reason I've chosen the title; "How to Love One Another." Today's study will be part one of a series on the "how to" of love.
- Let me hasten to say that I have no intentions of preaching and teaching another "how to" sermon, lest you misunderstand the title.
- The reason I say this is because the last thing we need is another "how to" sermon, to add to even more countless sermons.

"The churches of the land are sprinkled all over with bald-headed old sinners whose hair has been worn off by the constant friction of countless sermons that have been aimed at them and glanced off and hit the man in the pew behind."

(Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887)

- My hope is that this series will become for us, a template of sorts, that we can place over our Christian lives to see how it really fits.
- In other words, if in verses 1-7, we saw how the Book of Romans could change our lives, verses 8-15 can show us the love in our lives.
- The Apostle Paul is about to rise from the pages of scripture and show us how it is that we can be more loving towards one another.

1. By being faithful to one another (Verse 8)

(8) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

- v8 Paul expresses his thanks to God through Jesus Christ for all in Rome because their faith was being reported all over the world.
- This verse would seem to indicate that word had spread all over the known world about the faith of these believers there in Rome.
- This is remarkable for a number of reasons not the least of which is that, of all places, Rome was the most difficult to remain faithful.

F. F. Bruce "The Christians of Rome were unpopular - reputed to be 'enemies of the human race' and credited with such vices as incest and cannibalism. In large numbers, then, they became the victims of the imperial malevolence - and it is this persecution of Christians under Nero that traditionally forms the setting for Paul's martyrdom."

- Another reason that this is so remarkable, is that we have no record in the scriptures of anyone planting this church there in Rome.
- The thought amongst Bible commentators is that these Romans came to faith while in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
- What makes this so astounding is that not only was it difficult to be of the faith in Rome, there were no Apostles there for them in Rome.
- Perhaps it's for this reason that Paul was so eager to go to Rome, and furthermore, why it is that the Holy Spirit had him write to Rome.

- Also, it's vital that we understand that, the believers in Rome who were the recipients of this letter from Paul, had yet to meet Paul.
- The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans was written when he was in Corinth, during what is known as his second missionary journey.
- This will explain why the first three chapters Paul addresses some very serious matters as it relates to the immorality in that church.

- Be that as it may, and suffice it to say, when we are faithful in the faith, it will be celebrated throughout the community of faith.

Adam Clarke "... [Their faith was spoken of and] ...celebrated, throughout the whole world - in every place where the Christian religion is professed, through all parts of the Roman dominions; for in this sense we should understand the words, the whole world.

- By way of illustration let me contrast this with what happens to the community of faith when we're unfaithful and falter or fall in our faith.
- The message I communicate when I'm faithful is; "I love you." Conversely, the message I communicate when unfaithful is; "I love self."

2. By praying for one another (Verses 9-10)

(9) God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you (10) in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

- v9 He says the God he serves with all his heart preaching the gospel, is his witness that he constantly remembers them in prayer.
- v10 He goes on to say that he prays at all times and that now at last by God's will, the way may be opened for him to come to them.
- I find it interesting that this door is opened, and his prayers are answered, when as a prisoner appealing to Caesar he goes to Rome.

Charles Spurgeon "Little did he dream that his prayers were to be answered by his being conveyed in chains to the great city. Very mysterious are the Lords' ways of granting our requests.

- I think I would be grossly remiss if I didn't take just a few moments and point out something that the Lord showed me in these verses.
- It's in the form of a question; Have you ever noticed you only pray for people you love and care about? Have you ever wondered why?
- I would submit to you the reason is that it's virtually impossible to stay angry at, or dislike someone for whom you're praying for.
- You may not pray for someone for whom you don't love, however, the more you pray for someone you don't love, the more you'll love.

- This is why Paul loved the Romans so much, he prayed for them so much. The more he prayed for them, the more he loved them.
- I'll even take it a step further and suggest that the more we pray for them the more we love them then, again the more we pray for them.
- If we don't pray for someone because we don't love them, perhaps we will start loving them, if we will actually start praying for them.